

## Rejoinder from Hamza Azhar Salam to Bahria Town's response

March 2023

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre invited Bahria Town to respond to an allegation that the CEO Malik Riaz made threats against newspaper editor Hamza Azhar Salam in December 2022. This was allegedly in response to a story implicating Bahria Town's CEO in a corruption scandal.

- "[RSF condemns threats to Hamza Azhar Salam by Bahria Town](#)," The Pakistan Daily, 6 January 2023
- "[Pakistani newspaper editor threatened over story about high-level corruption](#)," Reporters Without Borders

A summarised version of Bahria Town's response is [available here](#).

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre invited journalist Hamza Azhar Salam to submit a rejoinder to Bahria Town's response. He sent the following response:

"The fact that Bahria Town is calling me Hamza Akhtar Salam instead of my name Hamza Azhar Salam is only one sign of the unprofessionalism displayed by Bahria Town's legal team. In a response to a legal notice sent by my legal team, Mr Azhar Siddique confused my educational credentials with my lawyer's who has an LLM from the University of Pennsylvania, reflecting that Bahria Town's legal team derives its influence and confidence from Malik Riaz's brazen power, not facts of the matter.

That Mr Azhar Siddique's reply was responded to by myself on Twitter, on 15 December 2023 which included a copy of my MA in Interactive Journalism from City, University of London. I also asked for Mr Azhar Siddique's and Mr Malik Riaz's educational credentials too but have received no reply.

<https://twitter.com/HamzaAzhrSalam/status/1603333789438148609>

As for my educational credentials, I have an BSc in Investment and Financial Risk Management from City, University of London and an MA in Interactive Journalism from the same university. I have worked as the London Correspondent for Pakistan's largest news organisation, Geo News, for which I have over 100 news stories with my byline.

<https://www.geo.tv/writer/hamza-azhar-salam>

I have written for BBC Urdu, Haaretz, and various other prestigious international and Pakistani news outlets under my own name.

<https://www.haaretz.com/ty-WRITER/0000017f-da5b-d938-a17f-fe7b18380000>

[https://www.bbc.com/urdu/world-55876413?fbclid=IwAR0583B7InadWH2ANwwS1pXo\\_rugHq7pwLkjZ761BA0s-ighbrzmuPelrIU](https://www.bbc.com/urdu/world-55876413?fbclid=IwAR0583B7InadWH2ANwwS1pXo_rugHq7pwLkjZ761BA0s-ighbrzmuPelrIU)

I have also appeared as a guest on Sky News, France 24, RT and various other prestigious international news channels.

<https://twitter.com/HamzaAzhrSalam/status/1565202808944599041>

<https://twitter.com/HamzaAzhrSalam/status/1588204939326750724>

That whilst Mr Azhar Siddique is now questioning whether The Pakistan Daily is a genuine media platform or not, he himself gave an exclusive interview to our Special Correspondent, Qamar Zaman Bhatti, outside the Lahore High Court just a little over a month before Malik Riaz's representatives issued threats to my life. Here is the link of the interview.

<https://twitter.com/ThePakDaily/status/1456645730265862149>

As a digital media outlet, there is no platform to register ourselves with the government, however, we are amongst the very few digital news outlets to receive government advertisements.

I am a member of the Punjab Union of Journalists whilst one of our colleagues at The Pakistan Daily, Mr Qamar Zaman Bhatti has served as the President of Punjab Union of Journalists and also as the President of Punjab Assembly Press Gallery.

Because of The Pakistan Daily's outreach in Pakistan, the Prime Minister has frequently called my self for press briefings as well as press conferences. Here is one example of my interaction with the PM broadcasted on the state broadcaster, PTV.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CkVFF7BgeWZ/>

I have no problem with sharing my credentials with Malik Riaz's team, despite the fact that the same has not been reciprocated by the property tycoon. Instead, I have received multiple threats to my person.

More recently, I have been indirectly threatened to stop reporting on Malik Riaz to avoid arrest in any fake case or to avoid any "accident".

That Malik Riaz's family has a history of using violence to intimidate anyone who speaks against them.

Mr Azhar Siddique, who represents Malik Riaz in his defamation case against me also represents Farah Gogi, who is alleged to have sold the Graff set to Umar Farooq Zahoor in April 2019 whilst travelling on a Bahria Town plane.

Coincidentally, Azhar Siddique also represents former PM Imran Khan, who is also accused in the same case.

Perhaps it is mere chance that Mr Azhar Siddique represents all the parties involved in the sale of the Graff set but I have been told by Mr Umar Farooq Zahoor, the buyer of the Graff set that he bought the set from Farah for a price of \$2 million.

That Pakistan's Accountability Watchdog, NAB, the National Accountability Bureau is currently investigated Malik Riaz is the same case.

That Malik Riaz was fined £190 million from the UK's National Crime Agency but used bribery to ensure that the money is returned to him. I have on the record quotes from the NCA which confirm that the £190 million fine belonged to the state of Pakistan and not Malik Riaz or Bahria Town.

That despite coercive tactics brazenly adopted by Malik Riaz and his team, I will continue to do my job as a journalist in Pakistan."